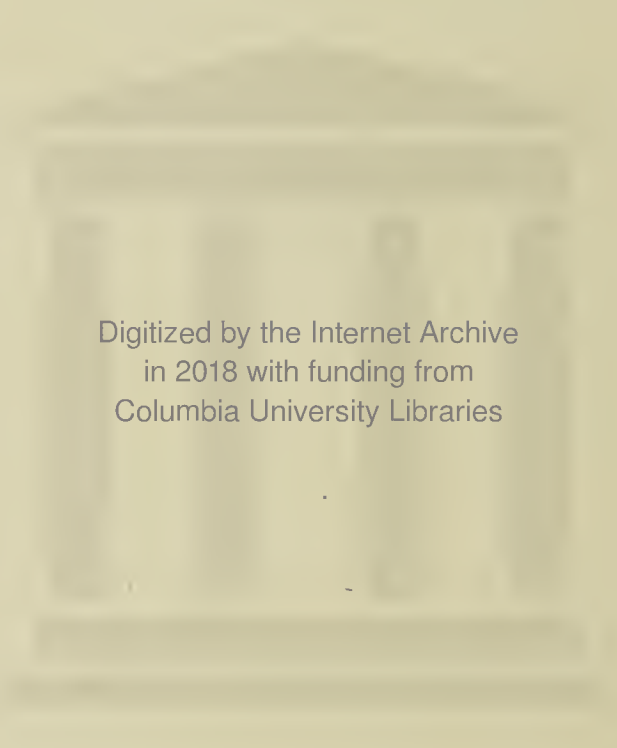


THE REDEMPTION OF MEXICO



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MEXICO

To those who are contemplating a foreign tour I would cordially recommend, both on the ground of economy and of the general interest of the tour, a visit to Mexico. By taking advantage of the tourist rates periodically offered by the railroads, the necessary expenses of a month's visit may be brought well within \$250. One can board a Pullman Library and Observation car in Memphis or St. Louis and make the journey without change and with all the most up-to-date comforts and conveniences of travel to the City of Mexico. In that city he can find comfortable and reasonable entertainment at hotels of either native or American style, as he prefers, with easy means of transportation to hundreds of near-by points of interest, and the likelihood of meeting American friends who will be delighted to see him and to show him the most abounding hospitality. We do not believe there are any more beautiful views on earth than those to be seen from the brow of the hill on which the castle of Chapultepec stands; nor any more picturesque or interesting national building than that famous castle, in which are gathered relics of all the phases of Mexican history from the days of the Montezumas on down through those of Cortez, Santa Anna, Maximilian, Juarez, and

Diaz, to those of Madero, the present occupant of the Palace.

Of overpowering grandeur is the view from this point of snow-clad Popocatepetl, the "smoking mountain," and his companion, Ixtaccihuatl, "the woman in white." The legend is that these were once living giants who, as the penalty of some crime, were changed to mountains. The woman died and the contour of her body covered with snow can be traced on the summit of the smaller peak. The man was condemned to live forever and gaze on the sleeping form of his beloved. At times his grief becomes uncontrollable and he shakes with great sobs and pours forth tears of fire.

Oriental Features

After crossing the Rio Grande on this journey one finds himself in a country which has not only the most pronounced foreign aspect, but he will immediately recognize that all his surroundings are of an Oriental rather than an Occidental character. About forty per cent (using round numbers) of the present population are pure blood Aztec Indians. About twenty per cent are more or less pure-blood Spanish, and the remaining forty per cent are Mestizos. The Spanish element is mainly found in the larger cities and is very little in evidence in rural districts and the small towns and villages through which we pass on our journey. While it has been found impossible to gather actual historical evidence of the origin of the native Indian population (whom we call for

convenience Aztecs, but among whom are the remnants of many other kindred aboriginal tribes) one who has visited China and Japan needs only a glance at them to be absolutely assured that they are of Mongolian origin. The yellow skin and straight, black hair and high cheek bones, and even occasionally the almond eyes, stamp them as close blood relations to the people of the Far East. If a half dozen Japanese coolies and a half dozen Mexican *peons* taken at random were dressed in the same style of clothes and jumbled together it would be almost impossible for an American to separate them again according to their nationality. How and when they got across Behring Straits and made their way along the Pacific coast and finally into Mexico and South America is a mystery for which those interested in ethnological questions will hope in vain for a solution. Dr. G. B. Winton in his book, "A New Era of Old Mexico," says: "The domestic animals, the utensils, the pastoral atmosphere and phraseology, the manner of building houses, stables, granaries, sheep-folds and the like, are all so similar to what obtained in Palestine two thousand years ago that a visit to Mexico serves as an instructive commentary on the Bible." But these special features are common to China and Japan, as well as to Palestine.

Are Mexicans Worth While?

The average Mexican *peon* is a person without ambition, initiative or energy. He has lived for a long time in his present apparently

hopeless condition of poverty, ignorance and superstition. This condition, however, is the inevitable result of the peonage system under which he lives, and is not the sign of an unchangably worthless character. Give him a chance of bettering his condition and the ambition to better it, resulting in an immediate access of energy and enterprise will appear. Sorry as his record in history may be it is not without some things to his credit. He threw off the Spanish yoke a hundred years ago by his own unaided efforts. He dealt with Maximilian fifty years ago in a fashion that has permanently discouraged any other scion of European royalty out of a job from seeking employment in Mexico.

Occasional heroes, patriots and statesmen have arisen from the native Aztec people, showing that this people is not naturally devoid of capability and of traits of character that make them worth trying to save. It is said that General Grant on returning from his journey around the world expressed the opinion that the greatest man he met on all his journey was Juarez, the fullblooded Aztec president of the Mexican Republic. While there might have been some deficiencies on the moral side of the character of Diaz, he was certainly a great man in respect of intellect and force of character. It is our belief that Mexico only needs the enlightenment of her people and the bringing of them under the power of the true gospel to insure her a great future as one of the sisterhood of free and enlightened nations.

Christianity in Mexico

The method by which Christianity was introduced into Mexico differs about as widely as possible from anything that could be suggested by the precept or example of the Apostolic church. In the year 1517 an adventurer by the name of Hernandez de Cordova sailed from the Island of Cuba, accompanied by one hundred and ten men, one of whom was a priest by the name of Alonzo Gonzales. On landing on the coast of Yucatan, a battle with the natives ensued, in which fifteen of them were killed and two were captured. In the intervals of the fighting the priest Gonzales despoiled a temple of its idols and other furniture, and when the battle was over this temple was made a Christian church and dedicated to the Virgin of Remedios (Our Lady of Succor) by whose favor the victory over the barbarians had been gained. This virgin became henceforth for the Spaniards the patron saint of Mexico. "Herein," says the historian Janvier, "after being duly catechised and purged of their sin and idolatry the two captive barbarians were made Christians, being baptized Melchor and Julian. And this was the first Christian church, and these were the first Christian converts, that ever were in the continental parts of the New World."

Perhaps the most monumental instance of what is sometimes called "cheek" in all history is that Cortez should have proclaimed his invasion of Mexico, with its accompaniments of devastation and butchery, to be a missionary enterprise. He sailed from Cuba under the

protection of St. John and St. James. On his standard blazed a red cross embroidered with gold. In response to his appeal the Emperor of Spain sent twelve missionaries, who arrived in June, 1524, and who were called "the twelve apostles of Mexico." Says the historian Vincent Palacio, "The conquered natives looked upon their conversion to Christianity as a necessary consequence of their defeat in battle. They also came to the conclusion that conversion and baptism were the most powerful shield behind which to protect themselves from further cruelty. They therefore entered the towns *en masse*, asking the missionaries to baptize them." The rite had to be performed wholesale, of course, and some of the priests boasted that their ordinary day's work was from ten to twenty thousand souls. In the course of a few years after the Spanish occupation the sacrament of baptism had been administered to more than four millions of the people. We have no recent statistics, but from a table published in 1895, we find the number of churches given as 8,820, and the number of baptized church members as 9,800,861. The character of the Christianity thus established has not essentially altered up to the present day and has been not unjustly described in the statement that "Christianity, instead of fulfilling its mission of enlightening, converting and sanctifying the people, was itself converted. Paganism was baptized and Christianity was paganized." And that is why we are in Mexico with our missionary work today.

Some Object Lessons

Our suggestion heretofore has been that those who have any doubt of the propriety of Protestant missions in Mexico should pay a visit to the two great cathedrals in that city, where in the broad light of day, and before the eyes of any person who wishes to observe them, the things which the church of Mexico serves up to its adherents in the name of Christianity are exhibited.

The Cathedral

Perhaps "The Cathedral" of Mexico City is, all things considered, the most imposing religious building on the continent. Millions of dollars wrung from the hard earnings of the impoverished devotees of the Mexican church have gone into its construction and furnishings. There is no space here for any elaborate description of it, but a description of it such as may be found in any Mexican guide book is well worth reading. On a visit to this cathedral in the year 1910 I saw in a shrine near the great altar an image of the Virgin on which were hung silver images of hands, feet, arms, hearts and other organs of the human body. These trinkets had been purchased at a stall in the temple enclosure for twenty-five cents each by persons who had ailments affecting any of the organs mentioned. These were then brought to the priest who ministers at this shrine to receive his blessing (for which we heard he also charged another twenty-five cents) and then be hung by him on the image

of the Virgin. The worshiper was then made to believe that through the priest's intercession he would in the space of two weeks' time be healed of his malady.

Another shrine in this cathedral is that of St. Benito da Palermo, the patron of wives with cruel husbands. His arm is outstretched and on it are always to be found hung a number of black ribbons of various lengths. The priest tells the unfortunate wife who resorts to him to measure her husband while he is asleep and bring the measure to him. He takes it, blesses it for twenty-five cents and hangs it on the arm of the saint with the promise, so we were told, that in two weeks' time the cruel husband would either reform or die.

Another shrine is that of St. Ramon Nona, the patron of the liars. His lips are padlocked, and those whose consciences are troubling them on account of lies may confess to the priest who ministers at this shrine with the assurance that their secrets will never be betrayed, provided always that the proper fee has been paid.

A member of the party who had been addicted to profanity in his youth declared that he had real difficulty in restraining himself from "breaking loose" on these clerical impostors as he saw them thus playing upon the ignorant superstition of the people in this money-making enterprise, the results of which were supposed to go into the coffers of the church, but a generous proportion of which, no doubt, found its way into their own pockets.

Cathedral of Guadalupe

The most interesting of all Mexican cathedrals is that of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is the patron saint of the Mexicans, as distinguished from the Virgin of Remedios, who is the patron saint of the Spaniards in Mexico. The images of these two rival virgins were displayed on the respective standards of the Mexicans and Spaniards in the War of Independence. There is a legend, which may be found in all the histories and guide books, of how, on the spot where the Guadalupe Cathedral now stands, this virgin appeared to a devout Mexican and sent by him a message to the archbishop that she desired a church to be erected on this spot in her honor. The sign which finally convinced the archbishop of the genuineness of the message was that when the devout Juan carried him, folded in his blanket, some flowers which, at the virgin's direction he had gathered from the top of a barren rock nearby, where no flowers could naturally be supposed to grow, and emptied them at the bishop's feet, there was found painted on the blanket where the flowers had been, a life-size picture of the virgin. It is to the credit of the Popes of Rome that for two hundred years they hesitated to give their official sanction to the genuineness of this miracle. But at length, in the papal bull of May 25th, 1754, the confirmation of the miracle was accorded, and the festival of December 12th, from that day to this the most imposing and widely celebrated of all the church festivals in Mexico, was instituted in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The famous blanket, with the image of the virgin stamped on it, now hangs in a gold frame over the great altar in the cathedral, and thousands of pilgrims, some tramping hundreds of miles and carrying their children on their backs, come yearly to the City of Mexico and the great cathedral to worship before it.

The peculiarity of this virgin is that, as she "appeared" to Juan Diego, so she has a way of "appearing" at critical times for the help of those who believe and trust in her. The walls of one room in the cathedral are hung with pictures illustrating how she has thus helped her votaries in times of peril. One of these pictures is that of a wagon and its occupant being run over by a railroad train. The wagon is knocked to flinders. One mule lies on one side of the track and the other on the other side. The man, however, stands on one side, looking with an expression of adoration on a vision of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who "appeared" just in the nick of time and saved him from destruction.

Another picture is that of a house being shaken by an earthquake; the furniture is toppling over and the inmates are in imminent danger of being crushed by the falling walls, but they are saved by the timely "appearance" of the virgin.

Another picture is that of a man who, as he says in the grateful lines in which he has written his story underneath the picture, is "being attacked by a furious animal." The animal intended to be represented in the picture is evidently a deer, but might easily be

taken for another cognate animal of a more commonplace character and more domestic habits. The man is represented as looking back over his left shoulder with a frightened expression at this animal, who is charging him from the rear, the consequences of which charge would manifestly have been disastrous in the extreme but for the timely "appearance" in his behalf of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is benignly looking down upon him from above.

These pictures purport to have been hung on the walls of the cathedral by the grateful beneficiaries of the favors received. The historicity of the incidents thus immortalized is not questioned by one in a thousand of the devout votaries of the virgin who visit her shrine.

It is because things like these are still going on under the sanction of the church in Mexico in the name of the Christian religion that we are also there with our protestant missionary work.

Is Our Work in Mexico an Intrusion?

It is a great mistake to suppose that our protestant work is looked upon by the best people of Mexico as an intrusion. There is, of course, a great deal of prejudice among the poorer classes, who are under the domination of the priests, but the more intelligent people are always friendly with our missionaries and appreciative of their work. When I was in Mexico two years ago for the purpose of locating a mission school, I found sharp competition between the different towns visited and was besieged at every point by delegations of dis-

tinguished citizens, who not only came to present the claims of their respective towns, but also in every case accompanied their appeals with subscriptions of money to help in putting up the school buildings. The town of Montemorelos, where the school was located, has offered to donate a beautiful square in the heart of the town, worth not less than ten thousand dollars, for the purpose of a girls' mission school, on condition that we would erect on this lot a building costing not less than ten thousand dollars. When we were in Mexico City looking after the legal status of our Industrial School, the Minister of Education assured us that he would interpret the laws of Mexico in the most liberal way possible for our benefit, for, said he, "the work you propose to do in your Industrial Mission School is the thing of all others that we are most anxious to have done for our Mexican people."

For all of the above reasons we hold it to be the urgent duty of our Southern Presbyterian Church to press forward with energy in the work which she has undertaken to give the pure gospel at the earliest possible day to the five hundred thousand people for whom she has assumed responsibility in the two states of Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas of our neighbor republic of Mexico.

